

PLUMAGE CHANGES OF THE JUVENILE
SOUTHERN YELLOW ROBIN (Eopsaltria australis)

Max Murn, Griffith. A.C.T.

I commenced mist netting operations at Angle Crossing, A.C.T. on the 28th October, 1962, and since that date, except for the months of December, 1962 and January, 1964, I have visited the area once each month. Because of this I am practically on "christian name" terms with all the resident birds.

The site is a quarter-mile long by 100 yards wide belt of tea-tree between a road and the western bank of the Murrumbidgee River. On the other side of the road there is a solitary dense clump of tea-tree some 30 yards in diameter at a distance of about 40 paces from the main section. The surrounding country is semi-cleared undulating grazing land.

On the first day of operations i.e. 28th October, 1962, two Southern Yellow Robins (Eopsaltria australis) were netted in the main tea-tree section just below where the small clump joined it before the road was put through. These were the first birds of the species I had banded. During the day both of these birds were caught in the same net again and again until, on investigation, I saw two fledgling Southern Yellow Robins sitting in the bushes behind the net. They could fly only with difficulty and I easily caught one of them, but as I was uncertain of the plumage of the juvenile Southern Yellow Robin at the time, I did not band the youngster. However, because of the behaviour of the adult birds in relation to these fledglings, despite the presence of the net, I consider it can be fairly stated that they were the parents.

Although both adult birds had been retrapped singly during the preceding twelve months, on the 27th October, 1963, both were retrapped in a net in the isolated clump of tea-tree. When they were found to be in the net each time it was checked, a search was made for their nest and it was soon found. The nest contained three well developed nestlings with half-inch pin feathers on the primaries and tail. I estimated that they were 8/9 days old.

On my next trip to Angle Crossing on 25th November, 1963, I retrapped one of the nestlings in a net only 10 yards from its old nest. In the months that followed I retrapped the other two nestlings on five occasions in either a net sited near the nest or in a net near the place where the parents had nested in the Spring of 1962. Usually one of the parents was also retrapped at the same time. Full details of the banding and retrapping of these birds are as follows:-

<u>Parents:</u>	<u>First Banded:</u>	<u>Retrapped - to 14.3.64</u>
020 45321	28.10.62	29.6.63 27.10.63 25.11.63 14.3.64
020 45322	28.10.62	30.3.63 31.8.63 27.10.63 25.11.63 1.2.64

<u>Juveniles:</u>	<u>as Nestlings:</u>	<u>Retrapped - to 14.3.64</u>
020 57647	27.10.63	22.12.63 1.2.64 14.3.64
020 57648	27.10.63	1.2.64 14.3.64
020 57649	27.10.63	25.11.63

It will be noted that a juvenile was handled at intervals of 29, 56, 97 and 139 days from the date of banding in the nest. Details of plumage at these intervals are as follows:-

29 Days - (4 weeks 1 day)

Characteristic "Female Rufous Whistler" like plumage.

56 Days - (8 weeks)

Brown plumage replaced by the adult plumage of the species, but rather "washed-out" looking. The rufous streaks on the head, brow and breast were quite pronounced.

97 Days - (13 weeks 6 days)

Adult plumage a little brighter and the rufous streaks less pronounced, but still clearly visible from a distance of about 20 feet with the naked eye.

139 Days - (19 weeks 6 days)

Indistinguishable from the adult bird. One of the parents was caught at the same time and in a physical comparison it seemed that the yellow on the breast of the juvenile was a little paler. The bill was blacker than that of the parent bird but this was because the parent's bill had tiny cracks in it which made it look a little greyer in comparison.

Apart from the above details concerning the plumage of these juveniles, I think it is of interest to know that the parents also mated together in the Spring of 1962. The distance between the two nests used would not have exceeded 50 yards and the hatching of the eggs would have occurred within 8/10 days of the same date each season, i.e. on the 28th October, 1962 they were feeding fledglings just out of the nest and on 27th October, 1963 they were feeding nestlings 8/9 days old. Parents and off-spring were still in a family

group after the youngsters were a little more than 139 days old.

In all I have banded 16 of the species in the area with 23 instances of recovery. It will be interesting to see which birds mate together, and where, in the next nesting season.

BREEDING SEA-BIRDS OF NORTH-EAST TASMANIA.

John Liddy, Kingscliff. N.S.W.

During three summers, visits were made to several islands off north-eastern Tasmania for the purpose of banding the young of breeding sea-birds. A general account of one such trip appears in the 'Bird Bander' Vol.1, p.117 and the technique used to round up large numbers of young Crested Terns was described in the 'Bird Bander' Vol.1, p.168. No previous account of the birds breeding on these islands appears to have been published.

If any other bander interested in banding on these islands would contact me, I may be able to assist him re access to some of the islands. December and early January are the most suitable times to visit the islands for banding purposes. For the more common species I have suggested suitable banding dates, based upon personal experience on the islands.

The Islands.

The islands off Cape Portland were described and located in the 'Bird Bander' Vol.1, p.117.

Little Waterhouse Island is about 18 miles west of Cape Portland, and lies between the coast and the very much larger Waterhouse Island. It is roughly a conical hill some 40 feet high and is about an acre in area; it is well covered with tussocks and small shrubs. Breeding species are White-faced Storm-petrels, Silver and Pacific Gulls, Crested Terns, Sooty Oystercatchers and Little Penguins. There is no beach, access being onto rocks. Launching a boat from the opposite coast is comparatively difficult.

Visits to the Islands.

The islands were visited as follows:

Baynes Island January 7, 1961; October 21, 1961;